

Public Informational Meeting Synopsis

For

**State Project Nos. 158-0211 & 158-0207
Merritt Parkway (Route 15) Safety Improvements, Resurfacing,
Enhancements and Bridge Improvements from
Newtown Turnpike in Westport to Congress Street in Fairfield
&**

Rehabilitation of Bridge No. 00728 – Merritt Parkway Over the Saugatuck River

DATE: Thursday, February 4, 2016

TIME: 7:00 p.m. Presentation

LOCATION: N.Stratfield Elementary School, APR/Cafeteria
190 Putting Green Road
Fairfield, CT 06825

IN ATTENDANCE:

Honorable Cristin McCarthy Vahey – State Representative 133rd District

Honorable Laura Devlin – State Representative 134th District

Town of Fairfield (Town):

Carol Way – RTM Fairfield

Jen Carpenter – Deputy Chief of Staff

Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department):

William Britnell – Principal Engineer of Highway Design

Michael Calabrese – Project Manager, Highway Design

Michael Cherpak – Project Engineer, Highway Design

Hugo Rivera – Design Engineer, Highway Design

Haseeb Ahmad – Design Engineer, Highway Design

Rabih Barakat – Principal Engineer of Bridge Design

Jon Hagert – Project Manager, Bridge Design

David Gruttadauria – Project Engineer, Bridge Design

Delois Barnes – Landscape Designer

Mark Rylander – Landscape Designer

Joe Sorcinelli – Project Engineer, District 3 Construction

This meeting was attended by 3 other individuals

PRESENTATION:

The public informational meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Project Engineer Michael Cherpak. Mr. Cherpak introduced the Department and the project's engineers. Following the introduction, Mr. Cherpak began the Department's presentation with a brief history of the Merritt Parkway, provided an overview of the entire corridor improvement plan, and shared the successes of similar projects in nearby Trumbull, New Canaan, Stamford, and Greenwich. Mr. Cherpak displayed slides depicting various proposed improvements, including upgrades to existing guiderail with Merritt Parkway Timber Guiderail, restoration work on historic bridges, and enhancements to the landscape. Mr. Cherpak handed the presentation off to Mr. David Gruttadauria who provided those in attendance details of the proposed bridge work. Mr. Gruttadauria discussed the different approaches the Department is using to repair and restore these historic structures. Mr. Gruttadauria also discussed some of the challenges associated with the restoration. Specifically, Bridge No. 726 carrying Newton Turnpike over the Merritt Parkway is experiencing rapid deterioration and immediate repairs are required. These repairs may require a complete closure of the roadway and traffic detours. Mr. Gruttadauria discussed Project No. 158-207, a rehabilitation project for Bridge No. 728 carrying the Merritt Parkway over the Saugatuck River in Westport, CT. Project No. 158-207 is a separate breakout project expected to be completed concurrently with Project No. 158-211. Ms. Delois Barnes was introduced and provided a presentation on the proposed landscape enhancements associated with this project. Those improvements included removal of invasive species, preservation of existing plantings, and the addition of new plantings in accordance with the Merritt Parkway Landscape Master Plan. Ms. Barnes then handed the presentation back to Mr. Cherpak who spoke briefly about the impacts to traffic during construction, impacts to environmental resources, and current design schedule. Mr. Cherpak indicated that the design of this project is expected to be completed in July 2016 and advertised for bid in the fall. This project is anticipated to start construction in spring 2017 and last for approximately 3 construction seasons at the estimated cost of \$60 million for Project No. 158-0211, eighty percent (80%) Federally funded / twenty percent (20%) State funded, and the estimated cost of \$12 million for Project No. 158-0207 which is one hundred percent (100%) state funded.

At the end of the presentation, the floor was opened to the public for their questions and comments which are summarized below. Of those in attendance, the proposed improvements were well received. The main issues discussed were cost and schedule of construction activities impacting local residents and commuters.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS:

A local citizen is concerned that the work being done on Newtown Turnpike Bridge will cause the Merritt Parkway traffic to be detoured. *Mr. Gruttadauria replied that only local traffic crossing Newtown Turnpike Bridge will be detoured and not the Merritt Parkway traffic.*

State Representative Laura Devlin asked if the proposed repair to Newtown Bridge will have the original look. *Mr. Gruttadauria replied that a form liner will be used to provide a similar look to the original structure.*

A local citizen is concerned that the project would take 3 years to complete. *Mr. Cherpak responded saying that from past experience and with the high number of bridges that need repair, the best estimate for the duration of the project is 3 years.*

A local citizen inquired about the current ratings for Bridge No. 735 and Bridge No. 736. *Mr. Gruttadauria responded saying those two bridges are in good condition and will only require minor repairs and cosmetic enhancements like graffiti removal and cleaning.*

A local citizen was concerned if the other bridges would require detours. *It was answered no, traffic will not need to be detoured (except for Newtown Turnpike). However, traffic control will be required to accommodate alternating one way traffic for work to be done on the bridges.*

A local citizen was concerned about the longevity of trees being planted along the Merritt Parkway, giving an example that the trees on the interchange of Route 8 and Route 15 have died. His comment was noted and *Ms. Barnes responded that there is a 2 year warranty on the trees planted that requires the Contractor to replace any dead or dying trees.*

A local citizen commented that following the Governor's State of the State address, the State is in an economic difficulty. He was concerned that this project, costing 60 million dollars, had many unnecessary costs. The citizen continued saying that we should avoid spending money on beautification and focus on what needs to be done to save money.

Ms. Carpenter from the Town of Fairfield asked how the noise and the lighting from construction will affect the local residents. *Mr. Joe Sorcinelli responded, yes it will be loud however they do have the local residents in mind. Lighting at night is always placed in such a way that it does not affect drivers and that considerations would be made to reduce construction related impacts to adjacent property owners.*

A local citizen asked if blasting will be done. *It was responded no.*

Town Representative Ms. Carol Way questioned why guide rail is placed on the shoulder, where it could potentially harm the vehicle during an impact. *Mr. Cherpak responded saying that the guiderail in itself is a hazard, however it is designed to be impacted unlike other fixed objects within the clear zone which may cause greater damage to the vehicle if not protected by guiderail. The purpose of guiderail is to shield the vehicle from hitting a fixed object and to guide the vehicle back on to the road. Guiderail would only be placed when a fixed object is to remain within the clear zone.*

State Representative Ms. Laura Devlin suggested the Department evaluate the need to address the critical point of this project given the current economic situation outlined by the Governor's address.

A local citizen questioned how much of this project is safety driven. *Mr. Cherpak responded that most of this project is safety driven. Previous statistics have shown that fatalities, injuries, and crashes have been reduced with the new improvements to the Merritt Parkway.*

A local citizen commented saying that the roads need to be maintained and appreciates the upgraded drainage system.

The attendees requested having electronic access to the project brochure.